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Early Days at Council Bluffs. By Charles H. Babbitt. Illustrated. Washington, D. C.: Press of Byron S. Adams, 1916. Pp. 96.

A path must be blazed by the special student and investigator through a great mass of unpublished documentary material bearing on the history of the Mississippi Valley, if conditions are ever to be ripe for some future historian to take up the story of that section of the United States and tell it, after the manner of a Macaulay or a Parkman, with an abundance of accurate, picturesque detail and on a scale proportionate to the vastness of the theme. Over and over again, the general historian will find his way blocked by a dearth of special studies on obscure, debatable points which he cannot, for lack of time or access to the necessary sources, clear up for himself. Thus we find Milo Milton Quaife, than whom no one has dealt in more scholarly fashion with early Chicago history, noting regretfully the absence of any thorough-going study from the sources of the old Chicago-Desplaines River portage, a vitally important topic for one who attempts to follow the early history-makers of Northern Illinois in their journeys of exploration or missionary propaganda. Hence, as Professor Clarence W. Alvord has pointed out, the great desideratum today in the field of Mississippi Valley history, is a series of scholarly monographs on special topics involving minute, painstaking and accurate examination of the sources.

Mr. Charles H. Babbitt's *Early Days at Council Bluffs* is, we take it, one of that type of historical monographs which Professor Alvord calls for. It takes up for detailed, intensive study, such points connected with pioneer Council Bluffs history, as the date of arrival of the first Pottowatomie bands, the withdrawal of the Pottowatomies in the late forties to their new reservation in Kansas Territory, the location of Fort Croghan, the date of construction, the location and general appearance of the "Old Blockhouse," transformed in 1838 into a Jesuit mission-chapel where Catholic services were held for the first time on the site of Council Bluffs. No other published account that the reviewer is acquainted with, covers these topics with anything like the accuracy and, at times, finality that mark Mr. Babbitt's treatment.

Two features in particular of the author's method call for commendation. First, he has consistently applied to the growth of uncertain local traditions and "old settlers" gossip in which he found his subject involved, the touchstone of the contemporary historical document, as far as such was available; and secondly, for a considerable number of the documents drawn on he has gone to a source of supply, which, in view of its extraordinary richness in manuscript material bearing on early Western history, has been utilized by surprisingly few students and investigators—the files of the Indian Office in Washington. Only here and there among students of American history, as in Anne Heloise Abel's *Proposals for an Indian State, 1778–1878*, has resort been had to this great storehouse of documentary sources, not only for Indian tribal history, but also for the civil and ecclesiastical beginnings of our early Western settlements.

Mr. Babbitt's failure to find corroboration in contemporary records for Father De Smet's account of the sinking of a Missouri river steamer some miles below Council Bluffs towards the end of April, 1839 (p. 56), is fortunately not due to a complete lack of the corroborative evidence sought for. The *Missouri Republican*, under date of May 6, 1839, reported the recent snagging and loss, seven miles below Council Bluffs, of the steamboat *Pirate*, at a place and time, therefore, coincident with the wreck described by Father De Smet.

We commend Mr. Babbitt's brochure for a very painstaking and accurate piece of historical research, just the kind of historical research that must be carried on by hundreds of other bands working on similar themes, if the material for the history of the Mississippi Valley is to be brought to that stage of cultivation, so to speak, where the general historian can begin to utilize it with satisfactory results.

Life and Letters of Fathers Ponziglione, Schoenmakers and other Early Jesuits at Osage Mission. Sketch of St. Francis Church. Life of Mother Briget. By W. W. Graves. Published by the author at St. Paul, Kansas, 1916. Pp. 268.

This collection of historical sketches contains the biographies of the first missionaries who visited Southeastern Kansas a hun-